

THE GHOST OF CASTLE MOUNTAIN

by Fay Kuhlman

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PREFACE

Although *The Ghost of Castle Mountain* appears to be a fanciful account of the history of Castle, Montana, it may have been intended as a serious account of the historic mining town. The account should be read as an entertaining, hearsay-history of Castle. The biographies of the author and illustrator are unknown at the time of this transcription.

The reader should be aware that this historical account contains many factual errors as well as information that cannot be substantiated in federal government documents or other independent sources. Here are some examples of inaccurate information.

- Population:** Official population estimates for Castle at its peak and decline are 600, 383, and 332. This booklet states the population as 5000 - a gross and uninformed estimate.
- Little Dot:** The woman known as 'Little Dot' was the wife of F. J. Lakel. She was a well-known and respected mine owner and operator and was a self-taught expert in mineral exploration and mining operations. She supervised mining operations for some of her investments in the Castle Mountains. This booklet slanderously portrays her as a woman of 'easy virtue.'
- Mining:** The early mining dates and 'facts' cannot be verified by official federal records of mining claims. For example, there is no record in the Department of the Interior for the statement that: "The first recorded mining claim was filed for the 'North Carolina, April 25, 1884.'" However, there is some verifiable information contained within this account.
- Castle City:** In historical documents, the name Castle City is never used. They always contain the official platted name, Castle, Montana. It is unfortunate that the US Geological Survey has called it Castle Town on their topographic maps and in their place-name database. However, local residents of Meagher County call it Castle Town to distinguish it from all the other geographic features that use the word 'Castle.'
- Jawbone RR:** This was a derogatory name applied to the Montana Railroad of 1896 which started at Lombard on the Missouri River and terminated at Leadboro, just south of Castle. It was never called the 'Jawbone' in any official documents.
- Other:** The number of saloons is an exaggeration but there were several. There is no factual information to support the statement that there were seven 'unlicensed' brothels. The statement about 'unlicensed' implies that there was a licensing process for brothels! The October 1892 Sanborn-Parris fire insurance map for Castle does not show any brothels within the platted town area.

There are many other questionable 'facts' in the account but it is still interesting and entertaining to read.

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THE GHOST OF CASTLE MOUNTAIN

Deep in the heart of the state of Montana lie the Castle Mountains . Verdant with pine and rich with game, this unspoiled segment of the Rockies echoes with an interlude in history unsurpassed for color and sheer human drama. On the slopes rising from Castle and Allebaugh Creeks there spread the ghostly remains of a once vigorous and lusty "Castle City". Born from the dreams of mining men, a city grew and prospered, then within the bounds of a few years passed away like a sigh in the infinity of time.

A news item in the summer, of 1883 read, "Upwards of twenty leads have been located in the Sixteen Mile country in Meagher County within the past two months and prospecting is progressing lively." The first recorded mining claim was filed for the "North Carolina," April 25, 1884

The news continued to spread, and the reports alerted many inquiring souls. It rested with an intrepid Missourian, Lafe Hensley, to strike farther north and break the first road up Allebaugh Gulch in 1886. His was the first log cabin built on the site, erected in May, 1887



Thus the seed of a town was planted, based on hopes of fruition for a claim recorded November 15, 1886, under the name of "The Cumberland."

Quickly miners and speculators began to come from far corners of the earth, irresistibly drawn by magnetic tales of the rich deposits of finest ores. Castle City did more than grow, from its one-cabin beginning, it mushroomed, in an incredibly short time, from an empty mountain gulch to a bustling young city. Castle, from start to finish, was unique in many ways.

Many of the most colorful personalities of the times found their way to Castle for one reason or another. Naturally there were people from all walks of life, but it was not a town of roughnecks primarily, being something of a phenomenon in the high quality of a good portion of its citizenry. The personal reasons why many educated and refined people settled in this remote and barely accessible valley, are grounds for many another story filled with drama and the passion of humanity.

They were a lively and interesting lot, Lafe Hensley was joined at an early date by his three brothers, Joseph, John and Isaac. Other wide awake and inquiring men came to see and stayed. Among the men who came early, was Dr. J. P. Rhoads, who had been Mayor of Sheridan, Wyoming. He built the first store in Castle, appropriately named "The Pioneer". He was a medical doctor, one of the first of the excellent professional men who chose to remain there and make it a home for bringing up his family. The early comers were enthusiastic, and this ebullient quality which remained characteristic of the settlement, was one of its innate charms. Over the narrow, winding mountain trails people arrived in surprising numbers and it appeared that "The eyes of the world were on the community" and the "exodus was to Castle!"

THE MINES

Discovery of the Cumberland with its amazing riches, sparked the whole state into becoming mine conscious. The history of this mine is a thrilling romance involving inestimable wealth, zealous development, and far- spread fame. It was the magnetic pivot around which

activity in the Castle Mountains centered.

Fired by this magnificent strike, knots of men spread out to locate other rich pockets of treasure. They found them readily, with their splendid ores of finest carbonates, rich, like those of the Cumberland, in silver and lead, with some of them varying to other worthwhile metals. These ores, high in value and easy to smelt, caught and held the attention of capitalists, resulting in a steady influx of influential men eager to invest and develop this new bonanza territory. Individual filings of new mining claims in the next few years, ran to a total of nine hundred and ninety-one in Meagher County, with a roster of names inciting the imagination to search for qualities of the men behind them, colorful names giving a personality to their holdings. One imagines the "Silver Star" as gleaming brightly, the "Judge" solemnly allowing removal of his innards, the "Alice" whispering of romance, someone's "Hidden Treasure" coming out into the open, the "Grand Central" smacking of a New York influence, and "Cleopatra" —ah, there was a woman!. Likewise down the list, names divulging piquant hints of the dreams, the humor, and hopes of the men who brought the mines in to being.



THE TOWN

Though mining was the foundation upon which the town was built, it was imperative that other business establishments be set up to care for the people themselves. Food was supplied through restaurants fed by shipments from outlying centers of supply. These places drew interesting proprietors. The west's own Calamity Jane was one of them. A little distance from town a slaughter-house was set up to provide the community with meats, and butcher shops opened in Castle. Meagher County's "Slaughterhouse Creek" derived its name from this industry.

Deer and elk from the mountains and occasional bear venturing down Main Street added variety to the diet of the townsfolk. Fruits were not plentiful and sometimes furnished a treat relished long in memory, such as the basket of grapes carried to school by Calamity Jane's daughter, to be shared with all the other children. O, "them were the days and them were the toimes" when goodies and luxuries were not taken for granted, but were savored to the utmost with an appreciation and satisfaction never attainable in a state of satiety. Before the town had thrown off its swaddling clothes, a bakery was established, lending its aroma to blend with pine smoke from the Castle kitchens, and to furnish bread for the dairyman's butter brought in from a nearby farm. Other milk products found a ready market in the community which quickly found it had many growing children.

Rooming houses and hotels sprang up to lodge, rest, and warm the human influx. It



mattered not that lodging places were packed. "When all beds were full guests were allowed to unroll their blankets on the floor at the prevailing rate for beds, the hotel guest chamber had one guest room as a sort of ram pasture where guests were given some sort of bed at \$1.00 per night – no meals – room about 40 feet by 20 feet."

Grocery stores were needed and built, freighting their supplies in on ore wagons returning from the shipping point. Clothing stores did a thriving business, not only with their ready-mades but from bolts of cloth, and the necessary accessories for making garments in the homes. A shoe shop was set up and carried on a lively business. Millinery shops supplied headware for the ladies who were delightfully feminine in spite of their rough surroundings, as attested by an excerpt from Publisher Shelby Eli Dillard's "The Whole Truth", one of the Castle papers. "There was great consternation in the business house of the ladies Barnes and Covely Monday evening caused by the discovery of a mouse in the house."

Establishment of a good sawmill made lumber available for the construction of homes and other buildings. Many of these were three stories high, and a good many homes with ten and twelve rooms were built, properly lathed and shingled. These were complete with ornate verandas and intricate scroll trim, all from the local mill. They had pantries and coal sheds, and out behind were the stables and carriage houses. There were parlors and fancy lamps, and some had insulated storage rooms for safe-keeping of foods in hot and cold weather. Severity of temperature made it necessary that nearly every room have a stove for heat. Good brick chimneys were built from an enterprising local kiln and were instrumental in keeping the number of destructive fires at a minimum, aided by a fast-moving bucket brigade. Water wells were dug by hand and lined with rock, hard and exacting work, but they furnished a water supply that lasted for the life of Castle City.

THE SOCIAL WHIRL

Interspersed with the acquisition of necessities for existence, elaborate provisions arose for satisfaction of the inner cravings of man and for the intellectual outlets demanded by the mentally alert populace of Castle.

A splendid two-story school building was erected, drawing instructors of outstanding ability, and who, in turn, were instrumental in giving rise to a second generation of dependable Castle citizens capable of attaining to high levels, but whose feet were solidly planted in the fundamentals of life.

A gay social whirl developed, keeping pace with the vigor of the town. Countless fancy balls and elegant dinner parties were arranged with the most elaborate preparations. Fashionable whist clubs were organized with an enthusiastic following. "Spelling schools" were popular, preceded often by admonitions of the news writers to "Get out your spelling books and study up."

Debating clubs involved themselves with many subjects, and political issues often were a subject. The Castle Mutual Benefit Society reported a debate on "Resolved that the Women of America should have the right to vote." Literary groups organized to share interests, and Chautauqua programs enlivened the camp. Publishers took note of the beehive of activity around them and had no trouble filling local news columns of their papers.

Besides the activity in Castle itself there was continuous news of departures to distant points on business or pleasure. Castle was in touch with the entire nation, and its progressive editors supplied world news consistently, thus keeping their readers alert to global events in spite

of the natural isolation of the camp. Not only were the adults busy, the youngsters too, had their activities. One of the old ditties popularized by this lively group comes down to us like this:

"One cent for coffee,
Two cents for bread,
Three for a beefsteak
And five for a bed –
And the breeze from the gutter,
Brings a salt water smell
To political guests of the
bummer's hotel."

They took advantage of the natural slopes down one side of town and up the other for coasting. Covered with ice and snow a good share of the time, these picturesque inclines were both boon and hazard to the residents. When Judge J. S. Kelly, for instance, "had the misfortune to stick a nail in his foot" he found, "In addition to the pain it is rather inconvenient to tote a cane around all the time and slip and slide on the icy hillside." But at night in the moonlight, ah! Romance!. Says

Editor Dillard, "Last Monday evening in solemn conclave with our own humble thoughts, we were aroused from our languid Rip Van Winkle ruminations by a rap at our sanctum door. We were confronted at the door by sweet femininity and gallant masculinity. We thought at first it was a surprise party. The young gentlemen and ladies constituted a moonlight coasting party and called to visit The Whole Truth and illuminate and enliven the den of the newspaper man."



LITTLE DOT

Miners who worked by day gambled on nights following the twentieth when payday came and the town went wild. Halls of the town blared forth their music and feet stamped upon the floors. Women of easy virtue were ready partners for the men, and there was never a dull moment. Ten regularly licensed saloons furnished liquor, and at least seven unlicensed brothels in the town sold drink along with their other wares. It was a rough and tumble town where men lived recklessly, and sometimes counted the cost in unusual and embarrassing ways.

Some remember a little woman of Castle who hied herself to Uncle Sam's post office one day to solve a vital problem. She waited there until the opportunity presented itself and then, through toothless jaws, informed several squirming men who dropped in, that her false teeth had been lost in her bed and demanded to know which of them took her choppers away.



"WE'D RATHER BE IN CASTLE"

Great whistles sounded up and down the valleys, testifying to the tremendous activity of the mines which were the life blood of the city. Accidents were frequent in the mines and in transportation as well as the usual household and everyday mishaps that mar the health of a

populace.

Doctors were busy men in Castle. Some of them, like Dr. Rhoads, invested in business and mining. Another who had been a professor of surgery in a prominent west coast college, was in Castle to enjoy the companionship of his paramour, the wife of a southern general, and found himself in the whirlwind of a life rigorous enough to test the merits of any man.

Editor Dillard was one of Castle's most ardent boosters at all times, and he could be rough in his editorial way with any who failed to agree with him concerning the brilliant future he saw for his town.

"The man who thinks Castle is not destined to be a great lead and silver camp has a head on his shoulders as peaked as that of a roan mule."

When the Klondike was making news elsewhere, Mr. Dillard retained and avowed his enthusiasm for his own community.

"Castle," he proclaimed, "Is the lead and silver Klondike of Imperial Montana." He insisted that there was no one in Castle "inoculated with the Klondike gold virus and more emphatically yet, "We had rather be a livid corpse in Castle than to own Alaska and all the sordid gold in the auriferous Klondike country!"

He was well supported in his enthusiasm. From the Northwest Magazine of January, 1891, comes this report!

"The Castle Mining Reporter is owned and edited by J. O. Lewis, an able writer and experienced newspaper man who has done a great deal to make the resources of the tributary mining region known outside. If he has one trait of character more prominent than another it is unbounded faith in the mineral resources of the Castle mountains and the future of the new mining camp town."



More and more mines were opened to pour out their riches, and hauling became an extremely difficult problem. It was increasingly evident that more efficient means of transporting the ores was imperative. Thus was born the idea, and characteristically, the struggle begun, for a railroad to Castle. The problem involved not only the immediate community of Castle but towns at considerable distance, notably Helena and Livingston, both wanting the terminals of the road which would carry such fabulous wealth.

Livingston argued, and quite correctly, that the only practical route was the Shields River Valley. There followed extensive surveys of all the surrounding countryside affected by the dream of a railroad. Men made countless trips east endeavoring to solve their problems. An inestimable amount of money was expended by many men, so great was the issue involved.

Castle maintained its heavy production while all this was going on, and its streets continued to be enhanced by the cries of the freighters hauling out the ore. West Canutt guided his ten-bull team with "Gee, Buckie and "Haw Buckie" and the loud crack of his great bull whip. The animals pulled the weighted ore wagons through main street and on down the trail toward Livingston.

Long strings of horses, often five pairs to a wagon, followed the same trail, requiring real skill in driving. Tenderfoot teamsters learned fast that the small-like bars of bullion were not as insignificant as they appeared. Experienced men watched without comment as newcomers loaded their wagons the first time as they might have loaded a box of wood, to move finally only a few feet, just far enough for all wheels to flatten to the ground.

Stage coaches and buggies dotted the roads from Castle to the "outside", often carrying men and women on important missions of state and national importance.

It wasn't long before the enthusiasm of the town turned to electric power and a water supply to run into their homes through pipes carrying pure mountain water in abundance. A Water and Power Company was formed, and an appropriate ditch was built at great expense and much hard labor, from the water's source to the town site of Castle.

All the while the fever pitch of mine-hunting and discovery continued unabated. Production of the established mines was monumental. News items recorded reports on shipments. "A fine body of carbonate assaying 32 ounces silver and 61 percent lead" from the Legal Tender mine. "Alice" products assayed 156 ounces silver and 67 percent lead with an 8-foot vein of ore. The scores of miners loaded out their splendid metals by the thousands of tons. Many, dozens of corporations were formed and stocks found a ready market. Mining experts came to marvel at the production achieved in these few miles of the Rocky Mountains, saying they had never seen the amount of ore with so little development.

The Cumberland Company ordered new hoisting machinery in April of 1890, at a cost of \$20,000, guaranteed to hoist safely from a depth of 1500 feet. Two steam engines with four-foot strokes, driven by an 80-horsepower boiler, furnished the power.

The smelters which had been built to process the ores took but the cream of the metal, leaving great riches in its slag. "A constant stream of bullion is running from the Cumberland Smelter furnishing "the sinews of war" to carry on a great work. Their monthly payroll amounts to fully \$30,000. and they make a net profit of more than as much more. This is one of the greatest mines in the world."

"A SMILE PERVADED HIS COUNTENANCE"

The Castle Tribune of March 12, 1892, tells of a smelter explosion a week earlier which "sounded in the gulch like if some mighty force was rending the hills in twain, and was about to topple over the silent castellated monitors that overshadow the town!" Gas in the feed pipe caused the blast. Manager A. J. Henke was present at the time and was little disturbed. His heroic exploits at Vicksburg and Lookout Mountain, when Sheridan penetrated the Confederate lines were good training for emergencies such as this. He looked to see if any damage had been done and when he learned that there was none, a "sweet smile at once pervaded his quiet countenance."



THE DISTAFF SIDE OF MINING

Attention to the mines was not exhibited by the men alone. Women showed their interest actively. One mine was "being operated by a man who has his wife as a partner in its operation. Day in and day out during the past month, be the weather fair or foul, the man and his wife trudged each morning from their home with lunch buckets in hand to the mine. She lowers the husband by the Armstrong hoist to the mine and when the bucket of dirt is filled, hoists it to the surface like a little man. Curious people who have trespassed upon her domain and who have watched her with interest, say she is quite handy as a top hand and a quartz sharp of no mean ability."



A man who said his name was William Shakespeare was guide for another mine contact by women who made the news.

"Mrs. Jimmie Fisher and Miss Florence Suydam visited the Great Eastern Mine and were kindly escorted all through the workings of the mine. The ladies enjoyed the thrilling romance of exploring one of the famous mines of Castle Mining district. The ore of Great Eastern is carbonates and as yellow as ochre. When Mrs. Fisher and Miss Suydam ascended from the different levels, cross-cuts and drifts of the mines, their peach blossom complexions were gone and their faces yellow as the northeast corner of an Oriental sunset. One of the ladies described her experience in epigrammatic terms. She said, Gee whiz, don't yer know, that the mine is rich wid silver and lead ore, but by golly its death on a body's good clothes and Parisian complexion."



"FREEZE A BRASS MONKEY"

Winter cold and snow presented problems that were real and earnest and were reported in Editor Dillard's whimsical manner.

"There is sufficient snow in the Castle Mountains this year of our Lord to suit the most fastidious weather crank...The weather in Castle this week has been cold enough to freeze the hind legs off a brass monkey."

But as it was confronted by problems, Castle solved them as best it could and went into a round of social activity to fill the long winter days and nights until Mr. Dillard was moved to remark, in January of 1893:

"It appears that the people of Castle will be compelled to petition to the proper tribunal to have at least two nights added to the week to accommodate various whist clubs and parties, dances, spelling schools, and other society meetings held in the town....They are at least two short."

"EVERYBODY AND HIS PAP"

Despite the gaiety, the cold of long winters grew monotonous, and a wistful longing for signs of spring was in every heart. Hopefully it was reported, "Snow is disappearing fast from the sidewalks and everybody in this great carbonate camp is glad to see it." Later, "Spring has come this time sure. We have heard the robin chirp its effusion of love and good will toward all mankind, and the bluebird warble its tale of woe and greeting of peace on earth. For a more optical demonstration of spring we desire to cite our readers to the jaunty straw hat of Judge Washington Parker and the ribbon bedecked bicycle of the charming Miss Florence Suydam as it flits down Main Street like a meteoric flash."

And finally, "Easter Sunday was a bright and balmy day in Castle and everybody and his pap attended church."

The latter statement of Mr. Dillard gives rise to the belief that the four denominations holding church services in Castle did a satisfying piece of work. The community did not neglect the spiritual side of its life, no matter how rough some of its human material may have been.

The first woman to become an "ordained minister in Montana was Mrs Alice Barnes, head of the Castle Congregational Church. Her efforts as minister and her work in the W.C.T.U. were outstanding. "Mrs. Alice Barnes, president of the W.C.T.U. of Montana is on a lecture tour throughout the state." Not only was she an able speaker, Mrs. Barnes also did considerable writing for publication in her humanitarian work for mankind.

Methodist, Lutheran and Catholic churches also were active. They persisted and grew, sparked with a sense of humor to brighten the struggle. The Catholic group hands down this story of a miner and his wife who dutifully made their way down the mountain trail toward Sunday mass. Past the Cumberland they went, but unfortunately, between the mine and Castle there was one of the ubiquitous saloons. The husband stopped for "just a minute and maybe one snort." Considerably later the lady entered the church alone. She was greeted pleasantly by the priest who asked, "And where is the good husband this morning?"

The lady broke into tears and loudly confessed, "Oh, Father; I hate to tell you, but he fell by the wayside, and here's five dollars for you to pray for him!"

Other philanthropists did their work too. An Orphans' Home was founded for Castle with a sympathetic and farsighted glance toward the future. Meetings were held to gather donations for unfortunates, both local and distant. "The Rev. Alice Barnes will preach next Sunday at Odd Fellows Hall. Subject, "The Armenians." The collection will go to those stricken people."



ACTION WITH ONE MIND

It was inevitable In a town bustling with such activity that there would drifters and toughs, sneak thieves and others, but this close knit community acted with one mind against such offenders, and the: town required a minimum of police protection. And woe unto any who sought to take advantage of the widowed and the fatherless^ Having gathered considerable cash to benefit the

family of a man who had been killed in a mine accident, the deceased was fitted out with a proper casket and dressed in a new suit as a token of his townsmen's esteem. After the services, the undertaker was caught in the process of removing the new suit. Needless to say, he left town post-haste.



"OVERHAUL SWALLOWTAIL"

Burials were made in the hill-top cemetery east and south of town, all victims of accident or sickness. La- grippe was one of the most persistent maladies. There were no killings in Castle during the life of the town, a fact remarkable among histories of frontier boom towns, and attests well to the facts which caused a visitor to express amazement at finding "so many intelligent men and charming women in one place."

Many of the gifted people of Castle were able to hold their own in any society while they kept their feet solidly on the ground, preferring to live in the town they helped to build.

"Hon. H. H. Barnes of Castle was in Washington City during the inauguration of President Bill McKinley and enjoyed the Inaugural festivities."

"The Whole Truth acknowledges an invitation to the grand inaugural ball at Helena. We will offer thanks for the invitation and express regrets by saying our swallow tailed dress coat has too much pine pitch on it. The coat is old adhesiveness itself. Every time we would take a girl in our arms to waltz she would become almost a permanent fixture."

THE OLD JAWBONE

The outlook for Castle had never been brighter when the struggle for a railroad was finished – and the bed finally laid along Sixteen Mile Creek and the Shields River Valley. This marvelous production, truly a "jawbone" achievement, brought easy transportation to the very door of Castle, reaching within a mile of the city proper, to carry away the bullion from the lower smelter. Completion of the road culminated one of the most interesting and involved ventures in Montana history. Only the snow then was left to interfere. "The railroad is alright, but the darn snow when it is bucked off the track, won't stay bucked." And because the snow, wouldn't stay bucked, "The beautiful rich carbonate ore is accumulating awful fast at the depot. There must be near two thousand tons awaiting shipment."

That made it necessary then for all the hauling to revert to "The horse and bull teams which do the freighting to and from this place until the weather moderates so that the railroad can get through the snowdrifts."



THE DEATH KNELL SOUNDS

It is a pity at this bright point in the history of the little community "beneath its high stone monitors, that the death knell sounded and the blow was dealt that killed Castle city.

President Cleveland had called Congress for an extra session, and after a long and violent struggle, Congress ordered, in October of 1893, that purchases of silver under the Sherman Act be suspended. This demonetized silver, and though the struggle for its reinstatement on a bi-metal standard was hard and bitter, and echoed around the world, the damage was done. Many mines closed down at once, and the great whistles blew for the last time in Castle.

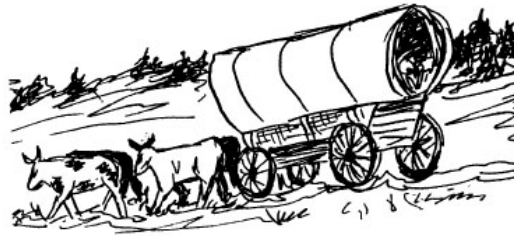
Business houses closed up by selling out or moving their goods, or by their proprietors simply walking out and leaving what would not sell readily. Editor Dillard, still hopeful of saving his town, hung on doggedly, longer than he could afford, but at this point a sadness is evident in his tone as he admitted the inactivity and wistfully hoped with an optimism that could not have been easy.

"It is serenely tranquil in Castle at the present writing, but God in his infinite goodness will take care of us and see that we get our taters and bacon – whether school keeps or not. It is so serene and calm in this great silver and lead camp – you can hear your thoughts walk out on your imagination and sit down upon the sofa of your brain. It is so quiet here in this great future camp that the squeaking noise of the prospector's coffee mill sounds like the rumblings of Old Faithful in the national park – trying to throw up its volcanic liver – for the amusement of pink-foot visitors of the tenderfoot east. In time the people of this camp will have money to throw at the ministers of the gospel as they walk along the streets of Castle on their way to the tabernacle."

Hopefully, the editor suggested, "There are a number of excellent mining claims in this camp which can be leased on good terms."

The mines continued to close down, one after another, with sickening rapidity. Too many subscribers were unable to pay their bills and with more than \$4,000. standing out on his books, Editor Dillard found that the community he had so ardently boosted, had not enough life left to help God to furnish his taters and bacon. He watched the exodus from Castle hopeful to a late date that his city would be saved by a rise in the value of silver. A few other scattered hopefuls

stayed on to the bitter end. Finally only the caretakers were left at the mines eking out an existence by working the slag in a crude fashion, and when the machinery was sold there was no longer any need of them.



THE LAST SURVIVORS

Among the buildings where upward of 5,000 had lived, hoped, and gone, finally only two men were left. Then one of Castle's famously heavy snows fell, isolating them and leaving them without food. One of them, in a desperate effort to survive, took horses and made it out where he obtained supplies. He returned to Castle and stopped to share his food with the remaining man. They had hot coffee together before he attempted to make the short distance to his own cabin. He collapsed and died before he reached it, and then only one man was left in the entire town. A headline in an 'outside' newspaper read, "Half the Population of a City Dies in Snowstorm!"



The last man finally was moved into a settlement for medical care and Castle was dead, indeed.

CASTLE CITY TODAY

Now more than half a century has passed since the whistles of Castle Mountains blew for the last time. Only a few of the thousands of buildings remain at this date, rattling their boards in the wind, and gradually falling into decay. Remnants of once-huge structures lie flat on the slopes above Castle Creek, some of their timbers still holding today the square iron nails of the pioneer. Water wells gape openly about the hillsides, their rock walls holding firmly, though all the hands that built them have gone on to other things. Outline of the ditch for the water system which never was completed, is visible from the town site. A few of the finer homes retain evidence of the splendor that once was theirs.

Portions of a few heavy stone walls remain, having been honestly built to serve a permanent and thriving city. An old blacksmith shop, built of hand-hewn logs, still protects the old smoke canopy under which many a job was done to keep shoes on the feet of horses and to mend the vehicles which made contact with outer civilization.

Allebaugh and Castle Creeks flow on in their timeless race, and on their banks are traces of old trails with their spirits of the past not far removed. Across Castle Creek, up a long slope, there is a dimly discernible trail of the funeral coach, and farther up, a few gravestones for those who sleep in the pine-clad hills.

* * *



EPILOG

This short account can cover only a small portion of the life story of the ghost city of Castle Mountain. Today, as in centuries past, the mountain is quiet, no longer ringing with the clamor of the mines. The mysteries of its wild and primitive forests, its canyons and caves, now carry only an echo of the vivid interlude when men swarmed its hills and valleys and reaped their treasure.

The lofty stones, in the manner of historic places retaining their ghosts of the past, continue to stand like turrets crowning the walls of an ancient castle, sentinels over the valley of the dead city, holding many secrets, and waiting for what may come.